



[bedbugs shown are not actual size!]

Bed Bug Facts

Quick answers
to the most common
bed bug questions

How do I know if I have them?

You may have bites. Bed bug bites may look and feel like mosquito bites, but not everybody reacts in the same manner. Many people have no reaction at all; some people have only a slight itching and a mild reddening of the area bitten. Others have more severe reactions that last for days or weeks with an intense itching. A pattern of bites can look like a rash and may even be diagnosed by a doctor as a rash or an allergic reaction. Many physicians are unfamiliar with bed bugs and might not recognize bed bug bites. People within the same family may react differently and it can appear that the bugs only bite certain members, but it is more likely that only certain members have noticeable reactions.

You may notice small blood spots on the sheets or pillow. Sometimes the bugs can be seen sitting or walking on the bed, headboard, or furniture. For people who do not react to the bites, this is the most common way of identifying the problem.

Do they spread diseases?

While bed bugs ingest blood from multiple hosts, studies have never been able to show that disease transmission occurs. Experiments have been run specifically to investigate this possibility, but to date, bedbugs are not known to spread any disease.

How long can they live without a blood meal?

Bed bugs are surprisingly able to survive long periods without a blood meal. They do not require water at all and are able to survive in dry environments without difficulty. In experiments, well-fed adult bed bugs have been known to survive for over a year when kept at cool temperatures (50° F). The survival time is shorter in warmer temperatures.



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How are they spread?

Small, flat, and highly mobile, bed bugs are excellent hitchhikers. Virtually all infestations are started when someone brings them in. Once in a home, apartment, or dorm room, they can spread to adjacent rooms. Because of their small size they are easily concealed in clothing, personal effects such as purses, and other common household goods. A list of the most common routes of infestation will include:

- Brought back in luggage from an infested hotel room.
- Brought in on 2nd hand/used/rented furniture
- Brought home on belongings from college dorm rooms
- Brought in on persons living in an infested home

How can I avoid getting them?

It is virtually impossible to guarantee you will never get bed bugs, but there some things you can do to improve your chances. Avoid buying/renting used goods; if you do, inspect them carefully before bringing them into your home.

How do you get rid of bed bugs?

Bed bugs can be difficult to eliminate for a number of reasons. They are small and hard to find hiding in cracks, crevices, voids, and in household goods. Their eggs are only $1/32$ " and pearly white and can be exceedingly difficult to see. It is easy to miss them. Studies have shown that many populations are resistant to many of the insecticides available today. Eliminating an established population requires diligence, training, and a thorough treatment of the premises.

You can kill bed bugs in a number ways. They cannot survive a hot water wash and a heated drying cycle (but they can survive a cold-water wash and a no-heat drying cycle!). Heat kills them readily and temperatures over 113°F are lethal. At 113°F it takes an hour to kill a bed bug, but the higher the temperature, the more quickly they die. A hand held steamer can be very effective in killing bed bugs and their eggs,. But you have to be sure to get sufficient contact between the bugs and live steam. It is easy to kill the bed bugs you find; it is hard to kill all the bed bugs in your home.

Bed bug control is best left to the professionals. You can find a number of products advertised that will eliminate bed bugs, but getting the desired results can be quite difficult if not impossible. Pest Management Professionals (PMPs) are trained and practiced in the latest techniques and protocols for bed bugs.



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